

OFFICE *of* DEACON

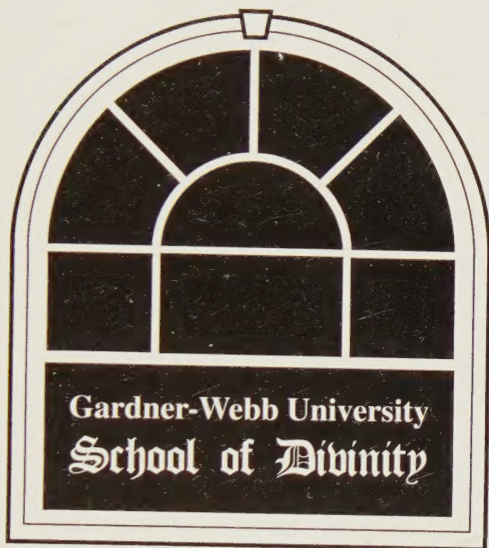


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THE OFFICE OF DEACON



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The Office of Deacon

By

J. T. Henderson

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"Financing a Church"*

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PREFACE

In recent years there has come to this writer a new conviction regarding the dignity and significance of the office of deacon. He has also been impressed that many of the churches have not given to this office the recognition to which it is entitled, nor have they honored it as the Lord intended.

This conviction has led him to do two things: first, to give a careful study to the limited discussion that is found in the Scriptures and in other literature regarding this office. Second, to speak on this subject at least once in virtually every Stewardship Conference that he has conducted. The interest and responsiveness of the deacons themselves has been most gratifying. There has come a suggestion from some who have heard these talks, that they be published in book form for use in study classes with deacons.

This writer is fully convinced that no step can be taken that will prove more helpful to

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the progress of a church than to provide that church with a board of deacons that are intelligent, active, and loyal. A pastor can suffer no greater handicap than to have a board of deacons that are lacking in consecration and intelligence; such deacons are not prepared to sympathize and coöperate with him in a policy that seeks to touch the ends of the earth. They are provincial, and can not "see afar off."

Before entering upon the sacred duties of this office, the men who are elected to fill this position should take a course of training under the pastor or some other capable teacher, that they may be prepared to reinforce the pastor in a large way. This book is intended primarily for such class work and can be completed in five lesson periods.

The author belongs to this order himself, and is therefore prepared to speak sympathetically on this subject.

INTRODUCTION

DURING recent years large numbers of books bearing upon the work of pastors, Sunday School teachers and officers, have been published, but scant indeed has been the literature produced which deals with the Scriptural office of deacon. Manifestly we have been proceeding upon the assumption that the office is of no special importance, or that the qualifications and duties of deacons are so well understood that nothing needs to be said about them.

Neither of these assumptions, however, is correct, and the acceptance of either or both has led to great injury to the best work in the local church. Surely no office in the church, which manifestly had its origin in the Holy Spirit, and the qualifications for which are set forth so clearly by the Apostles, can be of small concern or consequence. It is the *one* office of the local church definitely discussed in the New Testament. It is also

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incorrect to assume that the rank and file of church members, or even the vast majority of deacons themselves are fully conversant with the qualifications which a faithful deacon should possess, and the larger duties which are incumbent upon one who fills this office. The great difficulty underlying the whole matter has been that many deacons, and others as well, have come to think of the place as a lay *order* of honor and distinction rather than an *office* which calls for constant, faithful and spiritual service. Much of the hurtful practice in many churches is due to such confused thinking and misconception. That it is not an *order* but simply an *office* should be accepted once for all, which conception is supported by a fair interpretation of the Scriptures.

While so much is being written concerning extra-Biblical places of service in the church, which are necessary that it may fulfill its mission to the world, it is needful that we should also give a fresh consideration to that lay office about which the New Testament has spoken specifically. As we conduct classes in mission study for teachers and officers

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of the Sunday School, there comes the clarion call to study anew the office and function of the deacon. Many deacons are inefficient because they are not informed as to the duties which are expected of them. A well-trained pastor often sees his best efforts fail because of uninformed and untrained deacons, who do not rightly assist him. A new day is at hand in many churches because a course of instruction is being given to deacons as well as to other workers.

It will be generally accepted that no man among Southern Baptists is better qualified to write helpfully about the office of deacon than Secretary J. T. Henderson. He not only possesses a thorough grasp of the subject, but his wide observation as General Secretary of the Baptist Brotherhood of the South has added to his fitness for this service. He has come into the closest contact with churches both small and large throughout this territory and has been enabled not only to discover the causes of weakness in many local churches, but also to see at first hand the better plans which are in operation among many live and aggressive

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organizations. Having served as deacon himself, he has the advantage of approach from the viewpoint of a layman, rather than that of a pastor. Because of this, his discerning message should have especial weight with laymen who are filling this office.

His discussion of the origin of the office, Scriptural qualifications, manner of election, tenure of office, plan of rotation and practical suggestions for helping deacons to render an indispensable financial and spiritual service to their churches is Scriptural, sane, and withal tempered with a discriminating judgment and Christ-like spirit. He sets forth clearly how the office may be abused to the hurt of the church and Kingdom, but also points the way by which the deacon may magnify and use it for the glory of God.

Doctor Henderson has succeeded in bringing his book within small compass, and adapting it for use in a course of instruction for deacons. Pastors will find it highly suggestive and helpful to better organization. It will meet a growing need in our churches, and we hail its advent with delight.

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We wish for it a wide sale and careful study by both pastors and deacons. It will help to bring in a better day in every church where it is used.

J. R. JESTER.

STUDY

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

WINSTON-SALEM, N. C.

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THE OFFICE OF DEACON

CHAPTER I

ORIGIN

TWO OFFICIALS

THE New Testament provides for two church officials, who are to be set apart to their sacred callings, by "prayer and the laying on of hands." These are the bishop or pastor and the deacon; the pastor is the more important but the capable and faithful deacon is a close second. The Lord means that they shall be most intimately associated and thoroughly coöperative in the service of the church. The close relationship is indicated by three Scriptural considerations.

First, the bishops and deacons are spoken of together in the Scriptures; an example of this is found in Philippians, chapter 1, verse 1: "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of

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Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the *bishops* and *deacons*.” Paul here recognizes three classes in a church: the bishop or pastor, the deacons, and the saints in general. The first two are referred to *jointly*.

In the second place, their qualifications are set forth in the same chapter; in the third chapter of I Timothy, the first seven verses outline the qualifications and duties of the bishop, while the next six are devoted to the Scriptural requirements for the deacon. It is to be noted that the pastor is given the *primacy* here.

In the third place, the intimate relationship of these two officials is further indicated by the fact that their qualifications, in at least seven respects, are virtually the same.

The Scriptures outlining these qualifications will have further consideration in another chapter of this book.

The qualifications and duties of the pastor are discussed only so far as such consideration will throw light on the obligations of the deacon. They are partners and no independent treatment can fully cover the situation.

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PROVIDING FOR THE POOR

The office of deacon grew out of a certain situation in the church at Jerusalem; in the membership was a fulfillment of our Savior's statement, "Ye have the poor with you always and whensoever ye will ye may do them good." The benevolent spirit of these early Christians was in thorough accord with the spirit of Christianity and with the teaching of the Scriptures. "He that hath pity on the poor lendeth unto the Lord." "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

It is therefore to the credit of these early disciples that ample provision was made for the support of the poor. "Neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the Apostles' feet, and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."

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EXTRA WORK

The fact that these funds were placed at the disposal of the Apostles, would seem to indicate that they were expected to look after the wise purchase of food and clothing, also the just and equitable distribution of these supplies among the poor. This service, at the beginning, was comparatively light and the Apostles could make equitable distribution, but as "the number of the disciples multiplied" it imposed a heavy burden upon the Apostles and greatly detracted from the effectiveness of their high calling, "the ministry of the Word." Under the pressure of their preaching and spiritual service, they would find it very difficult to give adequate attention to investigating the needs of the poor; it should not be a surprise, therefore, if they did not always make the wisest distribution of the supplies. In any event, the record tells us that "there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration." Although the Apostles may not have rendered all this service in

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person, it would impose an unjustifiable burden to require them even to select capable representatives and direct their movements.

OFFICE OF DEACON CREATED

The office of deacon had its origin just here and grew out of this situation. While the Apostles did not exactly plead guilty to the charge that the "Grecian widows were neglected in the daily ministration," they did declare that it was unreasonable that they should be held responsible for this service. They said "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables." They had the conviction that their Divine call was to a higher and more vital ministry.

The twelve were doubtless guided by Divine wisdom in calling a full meeting of the church to deal with this important matter. A business session of this nature is more or less sensational and usually attracts a large attendance. The record indicates that "the multitude of the disciples" responded to this call of the Apostles. No doubt these early

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Christians were moved chiefly by a sense of duty and they did well to assemble in large numbers on this occasion, but they are to be especially commended because of their attitude toward the recommendation of the preachers. The church should think of the pastor as a religious specialist, both by training and experience, and should be disposed to give favorable consideration to any plans he may offer. Such policies are usually the result of mature thought and prayer. The recommendation of the preachers at this Conference seems to have been adopted without a dissenting voice. "The saying pleased the whole multitude," and so the first seven deacons were elected by unanimous vote. It is worthy of note that the Apostles did not take the responsibility upon themselves to *appoint* these deacons, but referred the whole matter, with their recommendation, to a full meeting of the church. They did well to recognize the Scriptural democracy which the Founder of the church would have prevail among its regenerate membership.

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WHY CONSIDER THEM DEACONS?

Some have questioned the claim that these seven men were deacons, suggesting that they were elected for a limited and temporary service, and that their position was not intended to be permanent. The majority of writers on this subject, however, believe that these men were veritable deacons and that the first seven verses of the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles recite the origin of this important office. This passage justifies the opinion that these men were expected to render a service of a material and business character in order that the Apostles might be free to magnify their spiritual mission. This service was limited in the beginning but became more extended and varied later.

The following considerations are offered in support of the claim that these seven men were deacons.

In the first place, a high standard of qualifications was required, they were chosen with care, and then set apart to their work by a formal ordination service. It hardly seems

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reasonable that such caution and formality would have been observed had these men been elected for nothing more than a temporary work. The Apostles were set apart to their high calling by the solemn and impressive ceremony of ordination. If ordination should be thought necessary with any other servant of the Kingdom, it would certainly be in the case of the only other Scriptural and permanent official of the church, who was intended to be the intimate associate and colaborer of the pastor.

The seven men were ordained, "according to the Scriptures," and we have no record of a similar service, except in the case of men called to preach the Gospel at home or abroad.

In the second place, there is no other account of the origin of such an office, nor is there any other record of the election of men to a position of this kind.

Further along in the New Testament there are passages that speak of the deacon, and one would readily infer that these Scriptures refer to an office already established and recognized. If the election of the seven, as

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recorded in the first seven verses in the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, is not an account of the origin of this office, the Scriptures are silent on this subject.

In the third place, the need for such officers has become more imperative with the growth and development of the churches. Provision for the poor, which was the special need that called for the creation of the office and the election of the first seven, is a *permanent* one; the Savior himself is authority for this claim of permanency. "For ye have the poor with you *always*." The poor have increased in number with the growth of population. Were the adequate care of the poor the only service to be rendered by these officials, there would therefore be a constant and an increasing demand for such ministry. The temporal and business affairs of the churches in general, however, so vital to the success of the Kingdom, have become more numerous and complicated with the passing years. These matters call for the attention of just that class of men described in the sixth chapter of Acts: "Men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom."

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While this three-fold qualification is very comprehensive, as the duties of the deacon became more varied and complex with the increasing demands of the growing Kingdom, it seemed wise to Paul, in his first letter to Timothy, to outline the qualifications of the deacon more definitely and in greater detail. This more extended statement, however, is in thorough accord with the former; it is virtually an interpretation or exposition of the first.

Other considerations in support of the claim that Stephen, Philip, and the rest of the seven were deacons, might be given, but the three already presented would seem conclusive.

ORDINATION

Some claim that the ceremony of prayer and the laying on of hands is "not essential to the formal setting apart of the deacon." In the case of the seven who were first chosen to this office, a formal ordination service was observed. Should we not construe this example as an expression of the

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Lord's will? When conducted with a spirit of devotion and dignity, the ordination is a very impressive service. If attended by a Scriptural charge to both deacons and church, it has rare educational as well as spiritual value. The deacon and the church need to be profoundly impressed with the importance and sacredness of this high calling.

Some think it wise to give the candidate a brief examination regarding his Christian experience, soundness in the faith, and his views of a deacon's responsibility. It is certainly worth while to make the ordination of deacons a significant event in the life of a church, one that will make an abiding impression upon all who come under its sway.

OBJECT

The *fundamental* purpose in creating the office of deacon was to *reënforce* the pastor. The deacon is expected to relieve the pastor of much service, especially matters of detail and business, in order that the preacher may be free to give his best effort to the devo-

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tional study of his Bible, the proclamation of the Gospel, and to promoting the spiritual welfare of his people. This claim is clearly set forth in these words: "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom ye may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word."

The deacon who is not sympathetic and coöperative with the pastor and who does not seek to render the work of the pastor more effective, is missing the primal conception of his office. In a special sense he is to be the pastor's colaborer and helper.

After the first seven deacons had been duly elected, formally set apart to this sacred work "by prayer and the laying on of hands," and had begun to function in an effective manner, a mighty revival broke out in the church at Jerusalem. The spiritual tides ran so high that a great company of the priests were swept into the Kingdom. Showers of spiritual blessing would come to many churches, if the pastors would devote themselves exclusively to "the work where-

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unto God hath called them'' and delegate to the deacons a multitude of duties that they should be able to discharge with equal, if not greater, efficiency.

This service by the deacons would intensify their interest in the activities of the church, promote their spirit of loyalty, and develop their capacity for a larger ministry.

In their effort to enlarge the usefulness of the pastor, the deacons need to recognize that they are *servants* and not rulers. The Greek word, *diakonos*, which stands for deacon in the original, means servant. In speaking to the elders at Ephesus, Paul recognizes that the "Holy Ghost hath made the *pastors overseers* of the flock," and in another place he refers to them as those that are "over you in the Lord." While the deacon needs to recognize the spiritual leadership of the pastor and to manifest no spirit of dictation, it likewise becomes the pastor to exercise his prerogative as leader with rare wisdom and in the fear of the Lord. The utmost freedom in counsel must exist between the pastor and deacons.

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SERVICE

While the fundamental conception in creating the office of deacon was to furnish an associate that could greatly reënforce the pastor in his spiritual ministry, the deacons need to bear in mind that this duty can not be discharged alone through counsel, however constructive and sympathetic. This end is achieved through zealous and loyal activity "in every good word and work." In the statement of the Apostles, "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and *serve* tables, the word translated serve is the verb form (*diakonein*) of the Greek word for deacon. The office, therefore, is not merely nominal or honorary, but demands active service. This service is not limited to passing the contribution plates and distributing the bread and wine, but is varied and multiform.

AUTHORITY

While deacons, especially those who fall below the prescribed standard, sometimes arrogate to themselves more authority than

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is justified by the Scriptures, yet the church should recognize that the deacon is sacredly set apart to an *office*, and this implies authority. To be sure this authority is subject to that of the church and is to be exercised in harmony with Bible teaching.

BOTH AN OFFICER AND A SERVANT

He can be an officer, exercise proper authority, and at the same time take high rank as a servant. The same word in the original that applies to the deacon, which means a servant or minister, is also used in speaking of Jesus. While all authority in heaven and in earth was given unto Him, He came into this world not to be ministered unto, but to *minister* or *serve*. He had supreme authority and yet was the greatest of all *servants*. An officer in the army has authority that must be respected and still he is preëminently a servant of his country.

LEADERSHIP

In the Scriptures referring to the creation of this office, we find this statement regard-

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ing those who were to be elected and set apart to the office of deacon: "Whom we may appoint *over* this business." This indicates leadership, direction; the high standard of qualification required of these officials and their ordination imply so much. Leadership is needed in that class of duties, largely but not entirely of a temporal and business nature, which is assigned to the deacon, as well as in the realm of the spiritual, over which the pastor presides. The church needs *lay* as well as *pastoral* leadership.

LEADERSHIP RESPECTED

While the deacon is not to "lord it over God's heritage," it is the duty of the church to recognize the dignity of his office and properly to respect his leadership. Such a conception should have a sobering effect both upon the deacon and the membership. It should lead the deacon to take his office seriously and the membership to be doubly cautious that the men whom they clothe with this authority shall be leaders they can afford to follow.

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If the deacon will regulate his official career by these three vital and fundamental conceptions: first, that he was intended to be a constant help and inspiration to his pastor; second, that he has a monopoly of the word which indicates *service*; third, that he is an officer and expected to exercise the leadership entrusted to him in the fear of God, he will prove an untold blessing to his church. He will likewise “purchase to himself a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.” The office had its origin in this three-fold conception.

QUESTIONS

1. Mention the two church officials provided for in the New Testament.
2. Give three reasons why they should be intimately associated and thoroughly co-operative.
3. Speak of the situation in the church at Jerusalem which gave rise to the office of deacon.
4. Tell of the provision that was made for the needs of the poor.

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5. To whom were the purchase and distribution of supplies for the poor first entrusted?
6. Speak of a murmuring that arose as "the number of the disciples was multiplied."
7. What did the twelve do and say in response to this complaint?
8. What was the attitude of the church toward the recommendation of the Apostles?
9. How many deacons were elected and what were their names?
10. State the three qualifications suggested by the Apostles.
11. Mention three considerations in support of the claim that these seven men were deacons.
12. Give the name and nature of the ceremony that immediately followed their election.
13. After these deacons began to function what occurred in connection with the church in Jerusalem?
14. Mention and discuss briefly the fundamental conception in creating this office.
15. How is the deacon to prove most val-

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uable to the pastor in his spiritual ministry?

16. Give opportunity for voluntary suggestions of an original and independent nature.

CHAPTER II

SCRIPTURAL REQUIREMENTS

IN the recommendation of the Apostles to the church in Jerusalem, they set a high standard of qualifications for the deacon. The number of men in any church that meet the Scriptural requirements is not large, and the issues involved are so vital that they call for prayer, conference, and the utmost caution in making the selection of these officials. Personal favoritism must not be allowed to have any bearing.

HONEST REPORT

In the first place, the Apostles suggested that the church should select "men of honest report." "Look ye out among you seven men of honest report." The instruction, "Look ye out among you" implies a thoughtful and thorough survey of the membership, that the choice may come to men of stainless

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reputation. Their high sense of honor should be recognized by all. They are to handle the Lord's money, and all the members should feel assured that every dollar committed to them will be appropriated in harmony with the instruction of the church.

The man who is lax and unreliable in the discharge of his personal obligations should not be entrusted with the Lord's business. It is not enough that he be regarded responsible; he should be noted for his keen sense of honor and his promptness in meeting every obligation. He needs to be thoroughly dependable.

A man was visiting a friend in his store; a customer entered and received a hearty greeting and courteous attention from the merchant. As the customer left, after making a liberal purchase, the visitor commented on the courtesy which the merchant showed him. The merchant said in reply: "This customer is one of the early settlers, and therefore entitled to more than ordinary consideration." As the customer appeared to be comparatively young, the visitor expressed surprise that he should be classed

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among the early settlers. The merchant reminded his friend, however, that this man does a large business with his store and never fails to *settle* his bill in full the first day of every month. The merchant therefore considered it entirely proper to class him among the early settlers. The Scriptures demand that the deacon shall be an "early settler."

The deacons determine whether or not the church is to have high rating in the business community. If they conduct its financial affairs with honor and promptness, this policy will impart to the church a prestige that will greatly enlarge its effectiveness as a spiritual force in the community. Let it be distinctly understood that the responsibility for securing this high standing rests almost entirely with the deacons.

TRUST FUNDS

There may be a surplus in the church treasury and the deacon entrusted with this money may be greatly in need of funds for his private business. It would be a grave

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infringement of the principle we are advocating for the treasurer to appropriate any of this money to his personal needs, although he might construe the transaction as a temporary loan. It is a misappropriation of trust funds and he should "abstain from all appearance of evil" in handling the Lord's money. If he must have money for his private business let him go to the bank and furnish such collateral as it may require.

There is likewise a temptation in some cases to divert funds from the cause for which they were contributed to the support of some local enterprise. Deacons have a grave responsibility just here. Some have been known to use money which was designated for Foreign Missions to defray local expenses or to assist some State Board or other enterprise that was in urgent need of additional support. While the deacons may mean to replace this money, such action is a betrayal of a sacred trust and should be strongly condemned; indeed such misappropriation of money, in some states, lays one liable to action in the courts.

Many church officials need a quickened con-

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science in regard to the honest handling of money entrusted to them. The honorable handling and disposition of public funds is so important that it is not strange that Paul gives reputation for honor the first place among the trinity of qualifications required of the deacon. The church is the Lord's institution and any dishonor that is allowed to stain its fair escutcheon brings reproach upon the Founder. Let the business affairs of the church be conducted with such marked integrity that thoughtful people of the world will be bound to realize that its members belong to "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people," well fitted "to shew forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvelous light."

SPIRITUALLY MINDED

"Full of the Holy Ghost" is the second requirement in the recommendation of the Apostles. The deacon should be spiritually minded, a man of prayer. Paul's statement that "men ought always to pray, lifting up

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holy hands without wrath and doubting'' has special application to the deacon. He needs to pray in his closet, in his home, in his church. He does well to avail himself of the spiritual enrichment that is afforded by the mid-week prayer meeting. He should consider it his duty to be present and allow no frivolous excuse to keep him away. A pastor reports that the chairman of his board of deacons, on a certain occasion, attended a picture show at the prayer meeting hour on Wednesday night. We could hardly regard such a deacon as full of the Holy Ghost. An example in striking contrast with this was found in the prayer meeting of a church in an eastern city; the visitor was informed that about eight hundred were present and among them were nineteen of the twenty deacons, the absent member being out of the city on legitimate business. These deacons entered the room with the pastor and sat on either side of him on the platform.

While the temporal and business element usually has a large place in the deacon's duties, if these duties are faithfully discharged in the spirit of the Master, the

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deacon's official action will likewise have a strong spiritual bearing; indeed there is never a time when spirituality will not prove to be a valuable asset with the deacon.

VISITATION

This is notably true when he visits the sick and sorrowing, or enters the home of the poor. If he is "full of the Holy Ghost," he is better prepared to enter into genuine sympathy with the unfortunate and to invoke the Heavenly Father's blessing upon them. He should possess a spirit that will enable him to "rejoice with them that do rejoice and weep with them that weep." Many will be the occasions on his round of visitation when a fervent prayer will prove a lasting benediction to a home. This writer recalls occasions when he as deacon has entered homes where there was affliction, and the gracious blessing that came to him and his associate from a brief season of worship. The expressions of gratitude from the afflicted for the spiritual refreshment that was brought to them is a pleasant memory. It requires a

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warm heart to comfort the sorrowing, cheer the despondent, and stimulate the faith of the discouraged.

If the deacon is a man of prayer and consecration, he will have a stronger and more wholesome influence with the membership of the church and will be the better prepared to make a true yoke-fellow for the pastor.

In view of these considerations he should "lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset him"; also avail himself of every spiritual agency at his command, that he may "grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ."

A WISE MAN

The Apostles further suggest that the deacon should be a man "full of wisdom." This qualification evidently does not imply that the deacon must be a college graduate and yet a Christian education would prove very helpful in discharging the duties of this high office. Any deacon with a worthy ambition would count himself fortunate to have the knowledge and discipline that are ob-

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tained from a thorough course in a religious institution. Wisdom, however, as used in this connection, perhaps has primary reference to sound judgment and discretion. Men of limited technical education are sometimes noted for their wisdom and prudence. Some one has said that "wisdom implies the ability to use knowledge well." The Apostles would have the deacon to be wise in counsel and prudent in speech. He should be a man of breadth and poise, able to see a proposition from all angles. He needs to be conservative, cautious and thoughtful in reaching conclusions, and not likely to fly off at a tangent. Deacons of such practical wisdom will be trusted by the church, and can render a most valuable service in adjusting church troubles and in promoting harmony among the membership. The first seven seem to have made a large contribution to the peace and spirituality of the church in Jerusalem; the "murmuring" ceased and a great spiritual awakening followed their election. While they should be *peace-makers*, in these last days too many deacons have been responsible for friction and discord.

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RELIGIOUS INFORMATION

While the *fundamental* conception in this qualification is not the information that comes from the study of books, the deacon should recognize that he is not measuring up to the high standard set by the Apostles unless he is well grounded in the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God and is informed regarding the needs and triumphs of the Gospel in all parts of the world. The devotional reading of his Bible, after some wise plan, should be a daily habit with the deacon. He should also be either a teacher in the Sunday School or a faithful member of the Men's Bible Class, if not an important officer. The deacon who is lacking in this knowledge certainly does not fully meet the Scriptural requirement, "full of wisdom." This standard demands that he keep abreast of the achievements of his own denomination and of the Kingdom in general. This he can not do if he neglects the reading of those periodicals that furnish reliable information, fresh from the fields, week by week and month by month. Without this knowledge he

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is not properly equipped to be “a vessel unto honor, sanctified, meet for the Master’s use, prepared unto every good word and work.”

SERIOUS LOSS

The deacon, above the average church member, should have vision, conviction, and passion for world conquest in the cause of righteousness. The Kingdom has suffered serious loss because deacons, as a rule, have been wanting in this vital matter. Many have been the occasions when a consecrated and ambitious pastor, who had taken both College and Seminary degrees and had enjoyed years of experience in the pastorate, has presented a well matured plan of enlargement for his church, and had it blocked by his Board of Deacons, because they were lacking in vision. Some of them do not read a religious paper, have never read their Bibles through consecutively, have not studied a book on Stewardship and Missions in all their lives, seldom attend a Convention or other meeting of their denomination, and therefore do not live in the same world

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with their pastor. They are absorbed in their business, are more or less under the sway of the commercial spirit, know little of what the Lord is doing through his servants in China and Brazil, and it is not strange that they manifest small concern for the progress of the Kingdom in "the regions beyond." They are not wicked but provincial; their interest is bounded by their limited vision. Many pastors have had sleepless nights because the deacons were not able to appreciate their plans, and therefore were not sympathetic and coöperative. It has been suggested that it would be wise for a preacher to condition his acceptance of a pastorate on the agreement by the deacons to meet with him, when he reaches the field, for the study of the duties of the pastor and the deacon and their relation to each other.

DEACONS NOT WHOLLY RESPONSIBLE

It would perhaps not be just to place all the censure for this situation at the door of the deacons. Honesty and frankness compel one to say that they have not had a very

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good chance. Study classes for deacons are a more recent invention than the radio, and yet the adequate training of the deacons is perhaps more vital to the on-going of the Kingdom than that of any other class in the church, except the pastor. If there is not opportunity to give all classes of the church the needed courses *immediately*, it would be good policy to let other classes in the church wait a little while and allow the deacons the right of way. Next to the pastor, they are the most vital factor in the success of the church.

A NEW DAY

It is gratifying to note, however, that there has been marked interest in recent months among pastors and other leaders in the proper equipment of deacons; it is equally gratifying to find that the deacons, as a rule, are very responsive. Numerous schools, designed primarily for deacons, have been conducted during recent months in central churches for the benefit of the entire association and also with individual churches

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for the local men; indeed such training courses are coming to be the order of the day and they bespeak better times for the Kingdom in the near future.

These classes for men, including deacons, may be conducted in connection with the Annual Training School of the church. The same pleas that are made for the religious education of the women and the young people on these occasions may be made with additional emphasis for a similar work among the men.

In some churches the B. Y. P. U. hour each Sunday evening is regarded as the educational period for the entire church and the deacons are included in the arrangement of the courses. Sometimes the pastor finds it convenient to take the study of a certain book with his deacons for five consecutive evenings each week until it is completed. The resourceful pastor, in conference with his deacons, will be able to select the time and method best adapted to their local situation. This is only a matter of detail; that this vital work shall not be neglected is the chief concern.

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While the pastor is expected to take the initiative in arranging for this study, he may think it wise to invite a capable and consecrated layman to conduct the class; as a rule, however, the pastor is the best prepared man in the church and it is entirely proper that he should serve as teacher, especially if a thoroughly qualified layman is not available. Indeed "apt to teach" is one of the Scriptural qualifications for the bishop that is not mentioned among those required of the deacon. The pastor should therefore recognize his responsibility for the proper training of the deacons.

When the deacons and the laymen in general are informed, their interest will be quickened and adequate revenues will flow into the treasury. The leaders are doomed to continued disappointment in projecting big programs until they shall have learned the art of enlisting the men who are supposed to have business acumen and who control at least eighty per cent of the money in the hands of Christian people. Let this teaching process in Missions, Stewardship and Scriptural Giving be multiplied in geo-

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metrical ratio among the deacons. Above all, make sure that this study is saturated with the spirit of earnest prayer.

It is distinctly encouraging that we are beginning to realize that it is good business policy to drill for oil in proven territory and to dig where we know there is gold.

In conclusion, the deacon should be a man whose integrity can not be called in question, a man of deep spirituality, and a man wise in counsel, thoroughly grounded in the Scriptures, and well informed regarding the needs and triumphs of the Kingdom.

QUESTIONS

1. Why should prayer, conference, and the utmost caution be used in the selection of deacons?
2. Explain what is implied in the requirement that deacons shall be "men of honest report."
3. State rather fully just how the deacons should handle the church funds entrusted to them.
4. Tell what is meant by the statement that

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the deacon shall be "full of the Holy Ghost."

5. What is his duty toward the mid-week prayer meeting?
6. Speak of certain duties in which spirituality is a most vital asset to the deacon.
7. What do the Apostles mean by the requirement "full of wisdom"?
8. What should be the deacon's attitude toward the devotional reading and study of the Bible, and should he be an active member of the Men's Bible Class in the Sunday School?
9. Speak of the loss that the churches and the Kingdom in general have suffered because of deacons who were lacking in vision and conviction.
10. Do you consider the deacons wholly responsible for this situation? Explain your view.
11. In what respect have we in recent months fallen upon a new day?
12. Make some suggestions regarding study classes for deacons—the best time, courses they should take, and who should teach.

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13. Why is the training of deacons more important than that of any other class?
14. Speak of the effect on the financial receipts of the church.
15. Give opportunity for voluntary remarks.

CHAPTER III

PAUL'S OUTLINE OF QUALIFICATIONS

THE statement of the Apostles, as recorded in the sixth chapter of Acts and discussed in the preceding chapter of this book, is amplified by Paul in the third chapter of his first epistle to Timothy, beginning with the eighth verse. His outline of the qualifications for the office of deacon is embraced in six verses. It may be helpful to the reader to have these verses printed here in full, as they appear in the King James version, that the student may refer to them conveniently in connection with the brief exposition that is to follow.

SCRIPTURES

8. "Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;

9. "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

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10. "And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.

11. "Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.

12. "Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

13. "For they that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."

There is no conflict between this deliverance and the one considered in the foregoing chapter; this is only a fuller and more definite statement.

A SERIOUS RESPONSIBILITY

The statement, "Likewise must the deacons be grave" implies that they are expected to take their work seriously; with the Apostle Paul they should magnify their office. It is fortunate if deacons are duly impressed with the gravity of their high calling. The "prayer and laying on of

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hands," also the formal charge, in connection with their ordination, should make a deep and abiding impression. The obligations of this office rest too lightly upon many deacons; this is indicated by their frequent absence from the regular meetings of the Board and from the worship of the Sanctuary. Too often they do not recognize the obligation to set a worthy example for the rest of the members, in the amount and manner of their gifts, in loyalty to the pastor and all the enterprises of the church, and in giving to their church duties priority in their life schedule. While Paul's instruction would allow the deacon to tell a clean joke and to be happy, he should realize that he is expected to be deeply serious in the discharge of his duties as deacon. If he is weighted down with a sobering sense of responsibility, the pastor may depend on him for loyal and liberal support.

A MAN OF VERACITY

Because of the deacon's connection with business and discipline, his intimate associa-

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tion with the membership, and the curiosity and inquisitive spirit of many members, his veracity will oftentimes be put to a severe test. He will therefore do well to heed the admonition of the Apostle, "Be not double-tongued." The deacon who is both a flatterer and a slanderer in speaking of the same person at different times, strikingly illustrates the meaning of "double-tongued." His words proceed from a double heart. The deacon's report of any person or action must be the same yesterday, today and indefinitely. An untruthful deacon in a church is a calamity; his duplicity is likely to stir up many broils and throw the church into endless confusion. A falsifier in the private ranks can greatly disturb the peace of the saints, but when such a member is promoted to official position, his hurtful influence is multiplied. Reliability is a rare virtue and the deacon should covet earnestly this good gift. His word should be as good as his bond. Veracity and prudence in speech give the deacon unusual prestige in promoting the harmony of the brotherhood, one of his leading functions.

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TEMPERANCE

Temperance has been defined as *moderation* in what is right and total *abstinence* in all that is wrong. Paul says, in the third place, that the deacon shall “not be given to much wine.”

Wine especially when new and taken in moderation, does not intoxicate and may be used for medicinal purposes. A little later Paul advises Timothy “to use a little wine for his stomach’s sake and his often infirmities.” In the practical application of this Scripture, we need to give earnest heed to three things: first, reference is here made to *wine* and not to distilled spirits or moonshine whiskey; second, in this use of wine, we are restricted to a *little*; third, we should make sure that our stomach is deranged, or that we have some other infirmity of the flesh. If we succeed in confining ourselves rigidly to these three conditions, we are safe.

Many of us can remember that our mothers kept blackberry wine in a secure place about the home, as a medicine, but it

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was used in very limited quantities and only when we were sick.

It is well also to bear in mind the words of Solomon in this connection: "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright." When wine is fermented and used intemperately it is "a mocker," as Solomon says.

In regard to the deacon's attitude toward whiskey, especially the grade that is available today, the only safe policy is total abstinence. In cases of sickness he will be able to find a more effective medicine, and it is never necessary for his family to use it in cooking.

A majority of the friends of righteous government today regard it as the duty of the deacon and every other Christian to stand firmly for the rigid enforcement of the Volstead Act and the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States; neither can we afford to support any man for President or other position of responsibility, who is not loyal to our prohibition laws and other righteous legislation.

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BENEVOLENT SPIRIT

The very essence of Christianity is unselfishness; there is no position in the church that a covetous man can properly fill. The deacons are the financial leaders of the church and above all others they should consider it their duty to set such a worthy example of benevolence that it will stimulate all the members to be more generous in their support of the Kingdom. The stewardship of example is a serious obligation. The prosperous deacon, who is "greedy of filthy lucre," greatly retards the financial success of the church by his example of miserly giving. He should bring the tithe into the storehouse upon every first day of the week; such a deacon may be counted on to make free-will offerings besides, as he is prospered.

It is not unusual to hear of deacons in good financial circumstances who have made no contribution to their churches in weeks and even months, and yet they are retained in good fellowship. In such cases, diligent and tactful effort should be made to teach

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them "the way of the Lord more perfectly." If they will not heed such instruction and admonition, the church can not afford to retain them in this important position; they are obstructionists while they are intended to be helpers. Indeed, the church itself would be justified in withdrawing fellowship, if these members persistently reject the counsel of the Lord's elect, delivered in love.

No man who is "greedy of filthy lucre" should be willing to accept the office that so imperatively demands the exercise of generosity. It is an important part of a deacon's duty to help enlist the membership of his church in the liberal support of its enterprises. In such work the covetous deacon would suffer a great handicap and could not hope to be successful. The people give little response to the appeal of a man who is too "greedy of filthy lucre" to set a worthy example. Liberality takes high rank among the qualifications of a successful solicitor for Kingdom support. One who is little in his support of the enterprises of the Kingdom, can not develop a winsome personality.

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THE MYSTERY OF FAITH

Faith is used in two senses in the New Testament: first it refers to *doctrine*. The deacon should be "sound in the faith," accepting at full value all the basal doctrines of the Bible, although he may find more or less of mystery connected with them. "How unsearchable are His judgments, His ways how past finding out." A man should not be elected deacon unless he is sound on the inspiration of the Scriptures, the doctrines of the virgin birth, the Divinity of Christ, the atonement, the new birth, and the resurrection; moreover, he should not be considered eligible to this important office unless he is sound on the great commission. He should be thoroughly imbued with the missionary spirit, recognizing that it is the whole duty of the whole church to preach the whole gospel to the whole world.

In the second place, faith refers to that implicit trust in Jesus as personal Savior which brings salvation. This marvelous change is likewise a mystery, but a blessed experience. "The wind bloweth where it

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listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” “By grace are ye saved through *faith*.” There is mystery in doctrine, there is mystery in the new birth, but we should hold on to both “in a pure conscience.” The deacon must cling by faith to the mystery both of revelation and redemption, receiving additional light and assurance as he proceeds in service. “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine.”

FIRST PROVED

Paul would not have the church “lay hands suddenly on any man” and set him apart to this sacred office. It is unwise to choose or recognize any man as deacon until the church shall have had the opportunity to know him intimately and to pass intelligently on his qualifications. This would mean that he should live in the community and in the fellowship of the church for months before he is considered seriously for the office of deacon. He should also have special train-

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ing in advance and his progress in this study affords fine opportunity to judge his fitness.

This policy does not admit the brother who comes with a letter of recommendation from another church in which he has served as a deacon, although the statement of this fact is set forth in the letter. He needs "first to be proved" in this new relationship. This principle would also rule out the election of any man to this office as a mere compliment, a recognition of his services in other lines, because of his money, or as a return for a personal favor. The supreme concern should be to elect a man who will be prepared to "use the office of a deacon and be found blameless."

The discussion of this vital matter will be supplemented in another chapter.

THE WOMEN

The authorities are generally agreed that the word translated "their wives" in verse eleven, should be rendered "women," referring to those women who serve in a capacity similar to that of the deacons.

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The word "their," preceding "wives," is not found in the Greek. The Revised Version gives verse eleven as follows: "Women in like manner must be grave, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things." It is claimed by many that this verse refers to deaconesses, or female servants, and states their leading qualifications, which are found to be in striking accord with those of the deacons. It is further claimed that inasmuch as the duties of these two servants of the church are very similar, they should be closely related in their activities.

While verse eleven perhaps does not refer to the wives of deacons, it is still a matter of no small significance that the wives of deacons shall be consistent Christians, thoroughly sympathetic with their husbands, and prepared to help them in their official duties. It is no small handicap to a deacon to have a wife who is worldly, takes no interest in church activities, and gives him little encouragement and help in his work.

The wife of a deacon should construe this relationship as a weighty challenge to her to become a genuine helpmeet.

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THE HOME LIFE

If the foregoing remarks regarding the wives of deacons do not find full warrant in verse eleven, they are certainly in harmony with the spirit and sentiment of verse twelve, which states that the deacons should “rule their children and their own houses well.” The orderly home life demanded of the deacon in this passage is impossible unless his wife is a woman of wisdom and consecration, in thorough accord with the plans and ideals of her husband. While it is God’s general plan for the race that every man shall be the husband of one wife, the Apostle’s statement that the “deacon should be the husband of one wife” is not intended to bar from this office the unmarried man who is consecrated and capable. If he is married, however, he must have but *one* wife, thereby giving practical evidence that he condemns polygamy. Fortunate is the deacon who has an ideal home—one in which the wife is intelligent, and presides with queenly dignity, while the children delight to

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honor and obey their parents. This happy home life gives him additional influence with the membership and greatly strengthens him in his official duties. People are slow to respond to the leadership of a man who can not regulate his own household.

REWARD

There is much to stimulate the deacon to earnest endeavor; if he "use the office of a deacon well," he has the assurance of high standing with the Brotherhood and an enrichment of spirit that will bring an abiding peace. He will enjoy such growth in grace as will impart to him great boldness as a witness of the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

A prayerful study of the qualifications outlined by Paul should deeply impress the deacon with the dignity and sacredness of his calling, and the rich reward that is promised him who uses the office of a deacon well should be a constant inspiration to the noblest service.

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QUALIFICATIONS COMPARED

This chapter closes with a brief reference to those qualifications of the bishop and deacon which are virtually the same.

In the first place, Paul says: (a) "A bishop must be the husband of one wife;" (b) "Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife."

In the second place, (a) "The bishop must be one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;" (b) Paul says of the deacons, "Ruling their children and their own houses well."

In the third place, (a) The bishop "must have a good report of them that are without;" (b) The deacon must be "a man of honest report."

In the fourth place, (a) The bishop must not be "a novice;" (b) The deacon must "first be proved."

In the fifth place, (a) The bishop is to be "Blameless," also "of good behavior;" (b) Of the deacon, Paul says, "Being found blameless." In the case of the pastor, Paul seems to think it necessary to repeat this

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requirement, but regards one statement as sufficient for the deacon.

In the sixth place, Paul also gives the bishop a double statement: (a) "Sober," "Not given to wine." (b) Of the deacon, "Not given to much wine." The deacon has a decided advantage here. With the bishop it is total abstinence but with the deacon "Not *much* wine."

In the seventh requirement Paul makes the pastor's duty emphatic by repetition (a) "Not covetous" and "Not greedy of filthy lucre." (b) With the deacon, "Not greedy of filthy lucre."

The striking similarity in the qualifications of these two officials emphasizes their intimate relationship and the demand for the heartiest coöperation.

QUESTIONS

1. Name the book, chapter and the verses that contain Paul's outline of qualifications for the office of deacon.
2. State what is meant by the admonition, "The deacons must be grave."

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3. Mention some practical duties suggested by this requirement.
4. Give a brief exposition of the command "Be not double-tongued."
5. State rather fully what a deacon's attitude should be toward the use of intoxicants and toward the enforcement of temperance legislation.
6. How should he exercise his suffrage as a Christian citizen that he may best promote temperance and righteousness?
7. What is the imperative duty of the deacon in the matter of supporting his church and its enterprises?
8. In what respects is a deacon who is "greedy of filthy lucre" hurtful to a church?
9. Explain two senses in which the word "faith" is used in the New Testament.
10. Mention some of the vital doctrines to which we should be thoroughly committed.
11. What steps of caution should be observed because of the instruction, "And let these also first be proved"?
12. Should a church recognize officially a

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deacon who comes with a letter from another church?

13. State the generally accepted interpretation of the expression, "their wives."
14. Do you think these women should be accorded equal rank with the deacons?
15. Speak of the influence of a sympathetic and consecrated wife in promoting the efficiency of a deacon.
16. What is Paul's instruction regarding the home life of the deacon?
17. What reward is promised those "that have used the office of a deacon well"?
18. State seven respects in which the qualifications of the pastor and the deacon are virtually the same.

CHAPTER IV

ELECTION

TENURE OF OFFICE

THERE are two leading views held in reference to the term of service for which a deacon should be elected. The first, and the one that has prevailed in most churches, provides for a life tenure, during church membership, or during good behavior.

The New Testament appears to be silent on this matter; it is therefore left to the good judgment of the church to adopt the method, in harmony with the spirit and general teaching of the Scriptures, that seems best suited to the local situation. To be sure, the church should be deeply solicitous to adopt the plan that will insure the greatest harmony and efficiency.

FIRST PLAN

One very thoughtful pastor says in support of the life tenure: "Men to be effective

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deacons, to imbibe the spirit of the office, need discipline over years, as much as a preacher requires drill in sermon-making through years in order to be a good sermonizer. The jump-in and jump-out method tends to lower the dignity of the position. Men are not in long enough to get imbued with a deep conception of what they ought to be and to do. They do not learn to magnify their office. Having found a good and faithful man, it is simple wisdom to retain him; by this process the pastor is at last surrounded by a group on whom he can depend as much as he can depend on himself. Such men ought to be foremost in prayer meeting attendance.”

In answer to the claim that this plan affords small opportunity to elect and utilize aggressive young men, who would make most efficient deacons, the advocates of this plan suggest that death and removal to other churches will provide a number of vacancies. It is frankly conceded that a worthless deacon seldom resigns. Churches usually succeed in disposing of an unsatisfactory pastor but it is a difficult proposition to retire an ineffi-

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cient, disloyal deacon, if elected for life.

The friends of this method insist, however, that the church should have the courage, in a tactful and brotherly spirit, to call for the retirement of any deacon who has fully shown himself to be unfit and unfaithful. They insist that the vacancies that occur in the three ways just mentioned afford the opportunity to elect a number of capable and faithful men who will greatly strengthen the Board.

In defending the second method, some claims will be made that are thought by many to offset the above pleas.

ROTATION PLAN

The second method provides that a deacon shall be elected for a limited period. The most common form of rotation is illustrated by the following example: in starting this plan, a large church may decide to elect twenty-one deacons, seven to retire at the end of each year for the next three; these groups may retire in alphabetical order, based on the initial letter of the surname. A man

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by the name of Adams would certainly fall in the first list and a member named Thomas in the third group. These men are eligible for election the *second* time on the ground that one term, especially in the case of those who served only one or two years, does not give sufficient opportunity to test their fitness. At the end of the second term they are ineligible for a year and likewise at the close of any successive period.

COMMENDABLE FEATURES

Among the favorable features of this plan the following are worthy of note:

First, the deacon elected by this method realizes that he has a limited term and that his hope of reëlection depends upon his faithfulness; he is ambitious to have the vindication of another term and is thereby stimulated to more zealous activity in the discharge of his duties. The deacon elected for life realizes that he has a permanent job and is less likely to be aggressive.

It is claimed by the advocates of the life plan that the church suffers loss by the re-

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tirement of efficient men for even one year. They insist that such a policy is unjust both to the deacons and to the church. The friends of the rotation method think, however, that the one year in the capacity of a private member will serve as a vacation for the faithful deacon and afford him the opportunity to study the office from a new angle. He is returned to his office at the expiration of the year with new vigor, a broader conception of his duty, and with a stronger purpose to make good. It should also be borne in mind that the counsel of this efficient deacon may be secured in a quiet way and that he also will find many avenues of usefulness during the period of his retirement from office.

This plan enables the church to retire inefficient deacons with less shock and disappointment to them, to their families and to their friends. It also affords the opportunity to call into service as deacons some choice young men who will honor the position and impart new life to the Board. If men have the position for life, they are likely to decline in the spirit of aggressiveness and at the

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same time they shut out a number of strong and consecrated men who would bring new vitality to this important office.

STATEMENTS FROM PASTORS

One very successful church uses a combined method: four men, true and tried, are elected for life; a vacancy by death or removal is filled by the selection of a man of similar grade. These men impart stability and serve as a balance wheel; the remaining sixteen are elected by the rotation method, four being chosen each year to serve four years, and a year must elapse before anyone can be re-elected. The thoughtful pastor makes the following comment on this method: "This plan furnishes new men and greatly helps, we believe, in keeping the church wide awake. It also *develops* new men. One of the best things about it to me is that the church without friction can drop any deacons who have not proved most helpful." This pastor speaks from an extended experience.

Some churches adopt the rotation plan, with the omission of the off year, and yet

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many believe that this period of retirement is one of its strongest features.

Another wide-awake pastor, who has tested this general method in three of the leading churches of the South, says: "The trouble about the old method is that oftentimes a man thinks that his being elected to the diaconate is the conferring of a favor rather than the assigning of a task, and he sits down on the job, keeping a real man from taking his place. I am strongly in favor of the rotating method. The only objection that I have ever heard to it is that once in a while you lose temporarily a very helpful and influential man, but the loss is only temporary, and if he is a superior man, he will serve his church whether he is a deacon or not.

"On the other hand there are many advantages in the rotation system. First, you are constantly discovering new material. You have a chance to reach out and get hold of aggressive red-blooded young men who will put enthusiasm into church activities. This is, to my way of thinking, a tremendous thing.

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“Second, it enables you to eliminate an inefficient or unworthy man without eruption. To put a man out of office cold-bloodedly alienates him, his family, and all of his friends, and every man, no matter how much of a nonentity he may be, has his friends, due to prevalency of nonentities.”

A teacher of Church Efficiency in a Southern Institution speaks as follows: “For years I have favored and advocated the rotation system (three to five year cycles) and the one year compulsory inactivity of each on expiration of his term. I think a church’s progress and efficiency depend much on this plan.”

The general endorsement of this policy by those who have thoroughly tested it, is a consideration much in its favor; besides, the method is to be commended because it is founded on practical judgment and sound reason.

A DEACON FROM ANOTHER CHURCH

It was claimed in connection with the discussion of Paul’s instruction, “And let these

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also first be proved," that a deacon coming from another church with a letter should not be recognized as a deacon simply because of his election to church membership. This position is supported by several considerations.

First, the Board of Deacons may have no vacancy. For the present, the church has limited the membership of the Board to a definite number; such recognition of all deacons who may come would crowd the office with unnecessary material.

Second, the deacon who is coming into the church may have been a failure in this office in the church from which he comes. The letter is silent regarding his official record; it is an unjustifiable risk to place responsibility on a man who comes as a stranger and without recommendation for official position.

Third; the deacon in question may have met the demands in the country church of sixty-three members from which he comes, but he is perhaps entering a church of more than a thousand members in a bustling city. He should have time to adjust himself to

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the new environment and acquaint himself with the policies of the new church.

The admonition that "these first be proved" should lead the church to wait until it shall have had the opportunity to observe at close range his manner of life in his present relationship. If he is found to fit into the situation, proves to be faithful and loyal to all the enterprises of the Kingdom, is liberal in his financial support, and is found to be a man of "honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom," all will see that it is wise to elect him deacon, when a vacancy occurs and there is need for his services.

DEACONS EMERITUS

As the infirmities of age approach, many deacons, who have been eminently useful for years, find themselves unable to render much active service. They love their church with an unfailing affection, find their chief joy in its fellowship and worship, and their presence is a benediction at any meeting of the deacons or the church. The rotation

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method should not be operative with them, but at a time entirely agreeable to them, they should receive the distinction of being recognized as deacons emeritus; this honor is for life. It is distinctly provided and well understood that they are not held responsible for any active service, but are heartily welcomed to all the meetings of the deacons and accorded full privileges.

This is a recognition they have well earned, their presence is an inspiration, and the Board may often profit by their experience and the maturity of their counsel. Such brotherly consideration enables these veterans to realize more fully the truth of the immortal words found in Proverbs: "The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." This writer, himself an humble deacon, has witnessed the blessedness of this policy in connection with the monthly meetings of the deacons in his own church. The brotherly consideration shown some worthy deacons who had honored the office by faithful service through many years, was a fine exhibition of the spirit of Christianity.

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JUNIOR DEACONS

Some churches elect a number of young men, who are loyal and give promise of large usefulness, to the office of junior deacon; the immediate object in this action is training rather than service. They render limited service in the nature of an apprenticeship under the supervision of the Board; it is claimed that this is the best plan of fulfilling Paul's admonition, "And let these also first be proved." This association and experience are fine preparation. While they attend the Board meetings for the educational value the discussion affords, they are not ordained until they are admitted to full membership and ready for active and complete service.

Other churches regard this period of limited membership unnecessary, claiming that these young men should receive such training in advance from the study classes conducted by the pastor; in this case they would be prepared for full duty from the beginning. Their fitness for this office is likewise appraised in advance by observing the measure of their interest and efficiency in the dif-

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ferent activities of the church in which they have engaged.*

There is nothing unscriptural in either of these methods; the pastor and the church should therefore feel free to employ the plan that gives the surest guaranty of efficiency in the service of these new officials.

METHOD OF ELECTION

This is a matter of more than ordinary importance. There are two things that need to be guarded: first, adopt the method that affords the least risk of electing incapable men; second, proceed in such way that the democracy of our government shall not be violated.

It is perilous to go into an election at a full meeting of the church, when all classes are represented, without any conference or planning in advance by a number of the wisest members. Through personal favoritism or other unworthy considerations, men who are wholly unfit may be nominated and

* Recently an aggressive church elected five zealous laymen to this office and then instructed the pastor to give them a course of training prior to their ordination.

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elected. This method is defended by some on the ground that no step must be taken that will in any wise restrict the full liberty of the humblest member.

Perhaps the safest and wisest plan is one that provides for a committee of five or seven of the most thoughtful members, including three or four deacons, who shall make a most careful and thorough survey of the membership, seek the counsel of the pastor, and then nominate double the number to be elected. As a matter of convenience all these names may be printed on slips of paper, leaving space at the bottom to write other names, and this ballot placed in the hands of every member present. The committee presents this list with their endorsement; sometimes the church approves all of these, as *nominees*, by formal vote; by this action they do not elect, but simply indicate that they consider all of them worthy. The church instructs the membership to put a mark (V) opposite the names of those they wish to support, up to the number to be elected, allowing them the privilege of writing and checking at the bottom the names of

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members not appearing on the ballot and for whom they desire to vote. While the nominating committee is a safety device, the last provision is intended to protect the democracy of the proceeding.

This plan may be varied in some minor details, as the pastor and church think proper, but this general method is strongly commended as giving promise of best results.

DEACONESSSES

While there is no account in the New Testament of the formal election of women to this office, there is Scripture clearly indicating that a valuable service was rendered by women in the early days of Christianity. There is a class of ministry, especially among those of their sex, which sympathetic and capable women can render more appropriately and effectively than anybody else. A very striking example is found in Romans 16, 1 and 2. (1) "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant (a deaconess) of the church which is at Cenchrea: (2) That ye receive her in the Lord,

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as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you; for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.”

Paul in his letter to the Philippians recognizes a similar service by women, and gives the following admonition: “Help those women which laboured with me in the Gospel.” Dr. Gambrell used to remind us that Paul did not command us to boss “those women” but to *help* them.

While most of the churches have not instituted the office of deaconess, their election to this position is becoming more common, and it will probably become still more general in the future. As indicated before, many thoughtful people claim that the policy is wise and in accord with Scriptural precedent and teaching.

The method suggested for the election of deacons would be equally applicable for deaconesses, and the number elected for either office should be determined by the demands of the situation as interpreted by consecrated common sense.

The New Testament gives no example of

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an ordination service for deaconesses; so far as this writer is informed no church has ever set the women apart to this work by formal ordination; some have featured their entrance upon this noble ministry by an impressive recognition service.

In closing this discussion it is perhaps proper to say that there are also a number of Bible students who do not think that the New Testament authorizes the office of deaconess. In the Savior's selection of Apostles and in the election of deacons under the supervision of the Apostles, women were not included. While it is frankly admitted that there is a class of ministry, especially among women, which no other group in the church can properly render, it is claimed that this service should be performed in a quiet and unofficial way.

The advocates of this theory regard modesty as a crowning virtue of womanhood and think that the tenor of Scriptural teaching does not favor public and official position in the church by women. While the word deaconess means female servant and is applicable to those women who render

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any service, the advocates of this position suggest that these women operate under some other designation to avoid the idea of official position. The Scriptures certainly do not accord to these servants of the Kingdom the same consideration that is given the deacons, and few churches have given them equal rank; indeed, there is no specific Scripture that authorizes the creation of the office of deaconess.

This claim does not discount the value of woman's work but only indicates that it is to be performed in a more quiet way; this has been the policy adopted by the women themselves. Their marvelous achievements have been won quietly among themselves, their policies having been projected in separate meetings.

This writer appreciates the wisdom of utilizing women in a large way in Kingdom service and would urge no rigid regulations regarding their official recognition.

QUESTIONS

1. Mention briefly the two views presented regarding the deacon's tenure of office.

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2. State some claims made for the first.
3. Give the commendable features in the second.
4. Comment briefly on the plans and pleas presented in this chapter by two pastors.
5. State why a deacon coming from another church should not be recognized as deacon in the new church when admitted to membership.
6. State what is meant by deacon emeritus, whether you favor recognizing elderly deacons in such capacity, and the reason for your position.
7. Give your position in regard to the election of junior deacons.
8. Speak of two references in the New Testament to the valuable service of women.
9. Do you think these women rendered this service in the official capacity of deaconesses?
10. Could such ministry be rendered as efficiently in an unofficial way?
11. Do you find any New Testament authority or precedent for the election and ordination of deaconesses?

CHAPTER V

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

IN this closing chapter it is thought proper to offer some suggestions in regard to organization, and to mention some lines of activity not specifically commanded in the Scripture, yet in accord with the general tenor of New Testament teaching; these activities are likewise in harmony with consecrated common sense, have been put to practical test, and are found to promote efficiency.

The Bible does not always go into minute detail in outlining our duties as disciples of the Lord; we are endowed with talents and afforded the opportunity for developing these gifts to such extent that we should be able to adopt such organization and methods of activity as are best suited to our local situation and that give promise of producing the largest returns.

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MEETING OF DEACONS

A meeting once a month, with called meetings when any matter arises that needs immediate attention, will perhaps answer all demands. With rare exceptions the pastor should attend. When the deacons think of considering and recommending an increase in the pastor's salary, or of taking any other worthy action that has direct reference to the pastor, he will recognize the propriety of retiring temporarily, that the deacons may have the utmost freedom in discussing the matter in hand. The pastor should know of every called meeting and the object for which it is called; if he should not think it wise to attend, or should it be impracticable for him to be present, he should be given full information regarding the action taken.

When the pastor is not present the chairman of the Board will call the meeting to order and direct the proceedings. While it is entirely regular that he preside at all meetings, it is regarded as a proper courtesy frequently to invite the pastor to take the chair. His thorough acquaintance with the

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matters to be considered fits him to conduct the business with wisdom and dispatch.

CABINET

The deacons, who are expected to be men of integrity, consecration, and wisdom, should be regarded as the pastor's cabinet. Cabinet members should be intelligent regarding their duties and in full sympathy with the policies of their leader. The President of the United States would not be expected to tolerate a cabinet member who seldom attends the cabinet meetings and gives evidence of disloyalty.

All the interests of the church should be freely and fully considered in the meetings of the pastor and deacons, and all matters of large import should come to the church by recommendation of the deacons. Such responsibility demands not only the qualifications just mentioned, but thoughtful study of every individual situation with earnest prayer for Divine guidance. In presenting any proposition for the action of the church, the pastor and deacons are supposed to have

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considered it from every angle and to offer a recommendation that is the result of thorough consideration among themselves and of intimate communion with the Lord. The deacons, or an elect committee from their membership, should have a place on the church council, composed also of heads of departments, officers, and the pastor.

In placing such large responsibility upon these two officials, the pastor and the deacons, it must be understood that the church has the right to appoint committees, refer proper matters to them, and should assign duties to every member. These officials are not required to perform all the services of the church.

GENERAL DUTIES

When the pastor is away on his vacation or for other reason, in harmony with a plan mutually agreed upon in advance between the pastor and deacons, they should see that a supply is secured and that he is properly cared for during his visit. The deacons should all plan to be present, should urge

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every member to attend, and give the visitor as large and responsive hearing as they accord to their pastor. Both deacons and other members need to be more considerate in this matter; absenting themselves on such occasions is a mark of discourtesy that reflects on their sense of propriety.

WHEN PASTORLESS

The responsibility of deacons becomes even more important when a church is pastorless. Their counsel should be valuable in the selection of a new pastor. The church usually looks to the deacons to provide suitable supplies, or to recommend a wise pulpit committee that shall have charge of this matter. There should be men among the deacons of such mental and spiritual preparation that they could conduct an acceptable prayer service or speak to the edification of the people at the Sunday worship. The deacons should so organize themselves during this period that every department of church activity will have such attention and supervision as will keep all the work going and

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growing until the church shall have secured a pastor. It is the duty of the deacons to keep the machinery oiled and running without friction.

Many churches seriously lapse during the period between pastorates because of incapable and inefficient deacons.

FINANCES

The deacons are primarily responsible for a successful financial policy. As the Scriptural plan of church finances is discussed in the author's book, "Financing a Church," it is not thought necessary to do more here than to emphasize the deacons' obligation in this vital matter.

In conference with the pastor, the deacons should formulate a plan that they think will prove most effective in the enlistment of every member as a generous and systematic supporter of the entire program of the Kingdom. The first and most vital preparation for effective service in winning others, is the inspiration of a *worthy* example. This is repeated for the sake of emphasis.

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As indicated in a former chapter every deacon should "bring his tithe into the storehouse upon the first day of the week." Such a deacon will greatly stimulate others and will grow both in the grace of the Lord and in the grace of giving. Every deacon should be so intelligent and interested that he will be winsome and effective as a canvasser; indeed, the deacons should be the most efficient men to head the teams of two in the Every Member Canvass. In this cause, as in others, they are not to render all the service but as ordained officials they are to direct and lead. If they are indifferent and "greedy of filthy lucre," the church may expect a deficit at the end of the year; there will likewise be a deficit in Christian zeal, and additions to the church will be rare.

It is highly proper that the deacons should receive the offering at the hour of worship. They are supposed to be men of business honor and deep spirituality; their service in connection with this feature of worship should impart dignity, and if they "abound in the grace of giving" their example will stimulate the generosity of others. The

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prayer in connection with this worship should be fervent, and a spirit of reverence and gratitude should characterize all, as they "honour the Lord with their substance." Robert J. Burdette, the humorist and Baptist preacher, suggests the following offertory prayer:

"God of all bounty—all things are Thine, and of Thine own free gifts to us we have brought our offerings to the altar of Thy righteousness. Now bless Thou abundantly the offerings of the rich, who have given much. Bless yet more abundantly the offerings of the poor, who, out of their poverty, have given yet more."

The deacons can do much to make this a blessed and a holy hour.

AN INSPIRING EXAMPLE

The high standard of qualification required of the deacon and the dignity of his official position should give to him more than ordinary prestige with the membership. He needs to take very seriously the stewardship of his influence. In the matter of the of-

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fering, the deacons should not fail to place their gifts in the plates before presenting them to others. Then let them proceed deliberately, in an expectant mood; every member of the congregation should handle the plate.

Deacons must never give occasion for any one to question their loyalty. The pastor should be assured that he can count on the sympathy and loyal support of these officials in promoting any worthy enterprise connected with the program of the church. Others may be indifferent and disappoint him, but the deacons never.

If the church decides to conduct a training school or a series of evangelistic meetings, the deacons should feel a large measure of responsibility for the success of this undertaking. Let them pray for the enterprise daily, plan their business so they can attend, and in every way become effective boosters of the meeting. They should join the pastor most heartily in any preparation that needs to be made in advance.

Recently this writer was invited to conduct a Stewardship Conference in a certain

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church; the deacons all attended, sat near the front, and were receptive and responsive to the discussions. Both the pastor and the visitor were greatly cheered by this loyal coöperation; it is not strange that the conference was a success, and that the treasurer reports a neat surplus in the treasury each month, after all obligations, including the pledge to benevolences, have been paid. Such coöperation is nothing more than their reasonable service.

CHURCH ATTENDANCE

In the matter of attendance on the worship of the sanctuary, the deacons should recognize that the stewardship of example is likewise a serious duty and should also be regarded as a privilege.

Indeed it will be their meat and their drink to go into the house of the Lord if they have the spiritual qualification, "Full of the Holy Ghost." If these leaders convince the membership that they "love the habitation of the Lord's house and the place where His honour dwelleth," it will prove a mighty in-

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fluence in filling the pews. Their personal solicitation with others brings meager returns if they "forsake the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is." Deacons need to heed the ancient admonition, "Thou shalt keep my Sabbaths and reverence my Sanctuary; I am the Lord." That deacon that gets into his auto on Sunday morning about 9:30, induces his wife against her will to take a seat by his side, and has so far degenerated that he puts his three children on the back seat, keeping them away from Sunday School, and goes spinning over the fine roads of his community while his pastor is preaching the unsearchable riches of Jesus, greatly depresses the spirits of his pastor, robs himself of the spiritual enrichment he so much needs, and sets an example of Sabbath desecration for every young man and young woman who know what he is doing. Such a deacon will face a grave record when he gets to the judgment.

A preacher was invited to address an automobile club; among other things he said: "Gentlemen, to be sure you should

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train up your children in the way they should go, and you should also train your automobile to go to church." When a deacon sacredly dedicates his auto to the service of his church on Sunday, it becomes a religious institution. Deacons need to rebuke the joy-riding that characterizes the Sabbath of our time by sacredly keeping the Lord's day holy.

This writer has often known deacons to select Sunday as the day to start on a vacation or to go east to purchase goods. They would just as well keep their business houses open on the Lord's day. "Thou shalt keep my Sabbaths and reverence my Sanctuary."

It should also require a worse headache or more unfavorable weather to keep a deacon from the worship of his church on Sunday night than from a club meeting on Tuesday night. Many deacons need a quickened conscience in regard to attending the Sunday evening worship; in some churches there are not enough present to look after receiving the offering.

In church attendance, in loyalty to the church and pastor, in generous and sys-

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tematic giving, in zealous service, in private and family prayer, and in every good word and work, the deacon should set a worthy example for the rest of the church.

ORGANIZATION

Some successful churches have adopted the plan of organization that assigns to one or more deacons that class of service for which they are best fitted. Deacons of deep spirituality and warm sympathy might be given the responsibility of visiting and of making proper provision for the needs of the sick. The number appointed to this ministry should be determined by the amount of service needed; in large churches and on occasions when there is an unusual amount of sickness, there will be a demand for a larger number than in small churches and under normal conditions.

A committee of deacons, perhaps three in number, including the treasurer, should be appointed to give special attention to the supervision of the finances throughout the year; let these men be noted for their busi-

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ness sagacity, high sense of honor and generous spirit. In addition to this committee, one or more of the most tactful deacons should be given the responsibility of enlisting all new members as systematic and generous supporters of every Kingdom interest. Let the new members be given the opportunity of seeing the treasurer and of making their pledges without solicitation; if they do not volunteer within a reasonable and definite period, this special committee is to call on them personally and solicit their support. It is unwise to allow delay in this matter.

This plan of organization would also provide a committee to see that the poor of the church are properly cared for, others would be appointed to visit prospective members and seek to win them for the church; a pair of the wisest and most consecrated deacons would be assigned the duty of seeking to reclaim any members who are indifferent or out of harmony with the church or pastor, others would be given the responsibility of making proper preparation for the ordinance of baptism and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Every activity and need of the

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church should be thoughtfully provided for, including even the proper heating and ventilation of the building, also the supervision of the ushers. One or more of the most intelligent deacons should be set apart to promote intelligence, especially on Missions, through the religious paper, tracts, study classes, etc.

It is also wise to have the church appoint a company of earnest and capable women who will be ready to reënforce these officials by the performance of certain duties for which they are the better suited.

The redeeming feature in this plan of organization is the fact that it assigns to the different deacons the duties for which they are best suited and gives them the opportunity of specializing. They concentrate on one class of ministry and should all the while become more and more efficient.

ANOTHER PLAN

A second plan would assign to each deacon, with a consecrated woman as associate, about thirty-five members who reside in a definite

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territory. Some churches would elect the woman to the office of deaconess, while others would appoint her as associate worker to render a quiet ministry for which the deacons are not suited. This matter is left to the choice or conviction of the individual church.

These two workers are expected to keep in intimate touch with all the members of their group and seek to enlist every one in all the activities of the church. By this plan their territory, or field of operation, is much smaller, but their range of ministry is much larger. They concentrate on a certain field and a limited number of members, instead of specializing on a certain class of service.

These workers are expected to report monthly the situation and progress among the members of their group; carefully prepared report sheets are furnished them for use in submitting their reports.

This general plan of organization is employed with most gratifying results by a large number of churches. A certain prosperous church of eight hundred resident members, under the direction of a successful pastor,

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has instructed each of its twenty-seven deacons to select an assistant. The assistants are usually young men. Each deacon and his assistant are assigned a definite number of members, whom they are expected to encourage and whose spiritual welfare they seek to promote. This church also makes large use of its women in most helpful service.

A resourceful pastor and church may be expected to devise new methods of efficiency from time to time, all of them in harmony with the spirit of the Scriptures and good sense.

SOME VITAL MATTERS STRESSED

In closing this discussion, it is thought well to stress some matters already referred to, because of their large bearing on the work of the deacon.

RELATION TO PASTOR

The first is loyalty and helpfulness to the pastor. The deacon who earnestly prays for his pastor daily is not likely to prove

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disloyal. Besides, he will probably assure his pastor that he is willing to undertake any class of service that the pastor may suggest.

Some pastors consider it wise to invite the deacons to occupy seats with them in the pulpit, thereby giving expression to the intimate relationship of these two officials. Should a church have eight deacons, two might sit with the pastor for a month; by this plan the entire number would be included in four months, and this responsibility would come to each pair three times a year.

The pastor might invite one of them each Sunday to make the announcements and occasionally call on them to read the Scriptures or lead in prayer.

Among the good results that would attend this policy the following are suggested: First, it would tend to impress the deacons with the gravity of their calling and cause them to be more orderly in their conduct during the week. Paul says the deacon should be grave; this experience would help him to meet this requirement.

Second, it would reënforce and encourage

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the pastor to have the consciousness that these sympathetic allies are sitting near by and fervently invoking the Father's blessing upon him as he preaches.

Third, their presence and reverent demeanor in the pulpit would make a wholesome impression on the church and congregation in general.

MEN OF INTELLIGENCE AND SPIRITUALITY

A prominent writer has said the supreme need of laymen is "a deep spiritual life *instructed in the things of God.*"

This is especially applicable to the deacon. Too many deacons have both a head and a heart trouble. "The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint." The head needs to be informed and the heart warmed. The deacon should "give attendance to reading" and also realize that "men ought always to pray." While this is a compound ailment it is not complex. As one feature of the two-fold trouble is properly treated, the other is at the same time improved. When a deacon adds to his intelligence by reading

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the Bible and other wholesome literature, he finds his spiritual graces quickened. He “grows in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ” at the same time.

No man can “use the office of a deacon, being found blameless” unless he has learned to read wisely and pray fervently. Without these two qualifications he can not be thoroughly sympathetic with the intelligent and consecrated pastor.

THOROUGHLY MISSIONARY

The deacon needs to realize that the church member who is anti-missionary is likewise *anti-Bible*.

The Bible is preëminently a missionary book; it not only contains great missionary texts but is missionary in its very texture. The idea of missions is woven and interwoven into the very warp and woof of the Word of God; the Old Book breathes the very spirit of Missions. Besides it contains some outstanding missionary texts whose plain teaching should be accepted by every deacon.

What could be more conclusive than the

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following deliverance: "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem"? No man should be entrusted with the responsibilities of this high office unless he is imbued with the missionary spirit. He needs to be missionary both in theory and practice, recognizing that Missions is the Mission of the church.

A deacon of this type will advocate a well-balanced budget; under normal conditions he will be unwilling that his church shall expend more money on the little community in which it is located than upon the rest of the wide world. His sympathies should be twenty-five thousand miles in circumference. Anything short of this is not in harmony with the spirit of his Master, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Jesus tasted death for every man. "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him."

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The writer would close this discussion with the missionary note ringing in the ears of the reader.

A NEEDED REFORM

While many of the churches are blessed with the services of capable and consecrated deacons, a large majority are not so fortunate. There is a general need that the churches shall magnify and dignify this Scriptural office. Perhaps no single step could be taken that would prove to be such a valuable reform. With the type of deacons described in these pages active in all the churches, the pastors would be so heartened and reënforced, and the membership so stimulated by the inspiring example of these officials, that a new era of harmony and efficiency would prevail in all Kingdom promotion.

QUESTIONS

1. State your view regarding extra-Biblical organization and activity.
2. How often should the deacons hold reg-

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- ular meetings and who should preside?
3. Speak of the function of the deacons in considering important matters thoroughly in advance, and of submitting a well digested report to the church.
 4. What duties devolve on the deacons when the pastor is away on his vacation?
 5. When the church is pastorless what new duties come to the deacons?
 6. Speak rather fully of the relation of the deacons to the financial policy of their church.
 7. What would be an inspiring example on the part of the deacons in making their weekly offering and in helping to promote special meetings in the church?
 8. Discuss at length a deacon's duty in the matter of church attendance, especially on Sunday evening and at prayer meeting.
 9. Speak of some ways in which deacons have been known to desecrate the Sabbath.
 10. Discuss the first plan of organization, noting the feature that especially commends it.

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11. Outline the group plan, calling attention to the service women may render.
12. What can you say in support of the suggestion that the deacons occupy the pulpit with the pastor?
13. Discuss quite fully the imperative need that deacons shall be men of intelligence and spirituality.
14. Speak of the Bible as preëminently a missionary book.
15. Do you think a man who declines to contribute to the missionary enterprise should be elected deacon? State the reasons for your position.
16. What is meant by a well-balanced budget? Should the percentage for Missions be the same in all churches? Explain your position fully.
17. Is there need of reform in the class of men whom churches elect to this high office and why?
18. If all the churches had capable and consecrated deacons, what would it mean to the efficiency of the local church and to the progress of the Kingdom in general?

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